The following is a translation of my rather irreverent piece, *The Ranting Evangelism Theory*, rendered by ChatGPT. Enjoying my playful Japanese prose, ChatGPT preserved its tone and freely translated it. In fact, it got completely carried away and created its own version of the text. While significantly simplifying what I originally wrote, it has skillfully conveyed what I truly wanted to say—more like an interpretation than a translation. Translation sticks to the original words; interpretation conveys the speaker's heart. ChatGPT, or rather this AI, has used its full capabilities to skillfully condense my rambling and meandering writing, expressing precisely what I meant.

Yatsuatari (take it out on me) Evangelism Theory

December 30, 1988 Japan Assemblies of God Missionary to the Philippines
Masaaki Sasaki

Why I Decided to Write This

The world has certainly become more convenient. But that doesn't mean human thinking has improved accordingly. Just because the thing I now face has changed from manuscript paper to a word processor doesn't mean ideas flow easily.

Like a shy boy who stands before the person he admires and is paralyzed by the beauty of her gaze, unable to utter even a sliver of his bottled-up feelings, I find myself unable to proceed. After much struggle, he finally manages to say something, only to realize how foolish and awkward it sounds, stumbling over his words. That night, he pulls the covers over his head and swallows his misery alone.

Likewise, I tried to pour out the thoughts I've long held inside, but even typing the first sentence makes me want to give up. Still, there's something I have to say. Though I've refrained out of humility, thinking it's too presumptuous, the longer I keep it

inside, the more discontent builds. And discontent is like dog poop you step on—or a sore deep in your nose—annoying and inescapable.

Even so, as someone who at least calls himself a preacher, I've learned the art of holding back some dissatisfaction and smiling warmly. I rarely let it show before church members. Instead, I usually take it out on my wife. Unlike the ancients who "dug a hole and whispered into it," or those who can lay all burdens at the Lord's feet in perfect spirituality, I am not that skilled. Human beings were made to confide in other human beings. We crave sympathy. That's how we were created. But lately, even taking it out on my wife doesn't help. I know it's selfish to burden others with my frustrations, but they keep swelling up—like the bloated belly of a sluggish pufferfish caught on a sunny seawall—until I can no longer contain them. I need a release valve.

I am disillusioned with the current state of the Japanese church. I'm disillusioned with myself as one of its members. After living in the Philippines for over ten years, I'm also deeply disappointed with the churches there. And I'm frustrated with myself as a missionary who has worked in those churches. Our churches lack power. They have not grown as they should. My nearly twenty years of ministry have become a museum of failures. My setbacks, like strands of frog eggs in translucent jelly, line up one after another to define my work.

My heart aches for churches that are stagnating—not because I've lost love, but because I'm disheartened by my own inability to carry out proper evangelism. Yet I haven't lost hope. It sounds boastful, but I love the Church. I often think I'd be willing to die for it. I even feel a strange affection for my many failures. That's why I decided to write down these failures and the many lessons I've learned from them—so that young Christians aspiring to evangelism might use them as a "walking stick before they stumble" or a "stone from another mountain." That way, my miserable failures might become treasures for the Church. If those who come after me avoid repeating my mistakes, the Church may grow stronger. In that case, even my venting won't be entirely in vain.

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I dislike training. I hate both giving and receiving it. I' m a lazy person who shudders just thinking of intense sports practice or military drills. Nevertheless, I' ve gone through some fairly tough training. That' s because I was taught by "those who speak according to the Bible" that, as I am, I am a useless person, good for nothing. I was led to believe that if I wanted to do God' s work, I would need to be trained to the point of death.

"I' m average at everything." That' s me. On a bell curve, I undoubtedly belong in the bulging middle—the kind of person you find anywhere. Out of ten people, I' d usually rank third to sixth. I could endure being seventh. But I remember feeling frustrated when I landed in ninth. So, when I happened to be second, I wanted to brag a bit.

Back when I was a student at Bible school, there was one time I came in first on a test. It was a class of only sixteen people, and I scored a measly 74. The only reason I ranked first was because, for some reason, the other students happened to slack off a bit. Still, it' s an unforgettable—well, I say "secret," but now I' m confessing it here—source of pride.

Someone of this level can never become great, no matter how much training he receives. When I resolved to take theology seriously and opened books by Reformed scholars, sleepiness arrived before understanding did. When I heard the testimonies of those from the Holiness tradition about their experience of sanctification, I became terrified. When I found myself in the midst of the fervent prayers of Pentecostal believers, I would shrink back, hide in a corner, and barely whisper my prayers. Reading the testimonies of wonderfully upright Christians didn' t edify me—it just made me feel miserable and defeated. As for the elegant and noble writings of Ayako Miura—they' re "bad for my heart," so I avoid them from the start.

Even becoming such a second-rate preacher as I am was already a stroke of luck.

And yet, even someone like me has the joy of salvation by grace. I want to evangelize. I earnestly desire to build up the church. With my hopes racing ahead of me, I somehow ended up becoming a missionary. So again and again, I rallied myself and devoured books on evangelism, pastoring, and missions. Fortunately, these were usually easier to read than theological treatises. But what a surprise—I discovered that even these supposedly easy books were written by master pastors, expert evangelists, superhuman missionaries, and philosophical scholars.

Each of them was overflowing with ability, having accomplished truly impressive work. They were first-rate people—at worst, second-rate. What they taught was extremely difficult for an average person like me to put into practice. It would be like trying to eat a hard rice cracker without teeth. Trying to stretch myself to reach their level might only lead to collapse and serious injury. Is evangelism really such an advanced art? Is pastoring truly such a sacred calling? Is it something only those with a special calling and specialized training can do?

As far as I can tell from reading the Bible, that is not the case.

At least, from what I've read in the Bible, that's not how it was. Evangelism should be as easy as buying a daikon radish from a local greengrocer, and pastoring is not some specialized task either. The current problem in our churches is that we've made evangelism and pastoring seem excessively difficult and exclusive. As a result, unless someone is extraordinarily talented, they are deemed incapable of doing any "decent" work.

But my goal is not to take ordinary people and subject them to relentless training until they're capable of this difficult work. That would be impossible for someone like me, who failed even in training himself. Instead, my aim is to identify and remove the various factors that have made evangelism, pastoring, and missions unnecessarily difficult. I want to make it possible for ordinary people to do more than ordinary work—just as they are.

Let me be clear: I'm not saying training is unnecessary. What I'm saying is simply that evangelism can be done even without training.

The Church is not a gathering of only the clever and capable. Yet it is this Church that has been entrusted with the mission of evangelism and the Great Commission to reach the world. It wasn't given to a small elite group of Christians who overflow with talent like honeydew melon juice—it was given to the whole Church. And in that Church, there are the slow, the clumsy, the absent-minded—and people who combine all those traits. So evangelism should never be considered a difficult thing.

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I graduated from a Bible school in Tokyo—not an American one, but a school run by Japanese people, for the purpose of training Japanese Christians to evangelize other Japanese. After graduation, I was assigned to a small church-planting ministry in downtown Tokyo. Though it had quite a few years of history, the church had only four members—two of them a married couple. The average attendance at worship services, including myself, barely reached six.

Two months later, one member moved away. The church was housed in a two-story wooden building—part factory, part apartment. I lived and worked in two connected rooms: one six-tatami and one three-tatami room, which served as the chapel, dining room, bedroom, and study. Still, I did my best. I put up a signboard. I handed out flyers. I distributed tracts. I held special evangelistic meetings. I did street preaching. I made home visits repeatedly. I blew the trumpet, beat the drum, and played the organ. Naturally, I prepared my sermons thoroughly—writing them out word for word, underlining with red, blue, and green lines. Red for raising my voice, blue for reaching out my hand, green for pounding the desk. I can't remember what yellow was for.

Anyway, that's how I struggled through two years of devotion and stubborn perseverance, battling malnutrition, until I was suddenly sent to Okinawa—which was still under American administration at the time—as a "missionary." By then, our average attendance had grown to about thirteen.

It was during this period that my trial-and-error process began. I feel genuinely sorry for the teachers who had so patiently instructed someone like me—a young man who was "too short for a belt, too short for a sash," and good-for-nothing—but the first thing I realized was this: almost nothing I learned during my three years in Bible school was of any practical use.

As a brash youngster, I believed I was better than most at preaching, so I naturally focused all my energy on it. At one point, I attempted a five-part "grand theological sermon series" from Romans 1:1. One Sunday, over forty minutes into the service, a young girl finally arrived. She had just graduated junior high and was working at a small factory after moving to Tokyo to live with relatives. Her IQ seemed to be below 80. I knew full well that she wouldn't understand my sermon. Still, it was something I had poured my heart into through prayer and study—I couldn't just cancel it.

But for that entire hour, I felt like I was trying to eat udon noodles with a spoon—utterly powerless and unable to grasp anything. That experience plunged me into a crisis of faith in preaching. In truth, I haven't fully recovered from it even now.

Nowadays, many Bible schools trace their origins to the "Bible School Movement" sparked by people like Moody and Torrey. These schools arose in response to the overly academic and specialized seminary education of the time, which had grown so intellectual that it no longer met the needs of the general public. Bible schools were meant to fix that.

However, I hear that even these Bible schools are now drifting away from the general public. Many Bible schools in countries once considered missionary fields—Japan included—are following the same trend as those in the United States.

But even more seriously, the vast majority of these Bible schools are still content to simply copy American models. They don't offer education adapted to the local culture, national circumstances, or real-world needs. I've heard that in America, over 60% of the population belongs to some church. More than 45% attend regularly, and about 35% have had a "born-again" experience.

In such a society, producing skilled pastors is important. As long as the pastor is good at shepherding, "sheep from withered pastures" next door will leap over the fence in droves, seeking greener fields. Successful churches often have "good shepherds." Their congregations are full of sheep who've jumped fences.

Naturally, the curriculum at Bible schools is built around pastoral training.

But what about Japan? And what about other mission fields? Even if not as low as Japan, it's not unusual for Christian populations to make up just a few percent of the whole nation. There are hardly any sheep to shepherd. Even if you crafted a sermon so good that it would make Spurgeon envious, there's no one to listen to it.

What mission-field Bible schools should be teaching is not how to craft eloquent sermons when there's no audience. Rather, they should teach how to find people

willing to listen—even to clumsy sermons. In other words, we need to shift the curriculum from a pastoral model to an evangelistic one.

Because of the current state of Bible schools, their graduates—though able to preach—are unable to evangelize. As a result, more and more pastors are repeating the same trial and error as I have. Those caught in trial and error are, in a sense, drowning. And like drowning men grasping at straws, these pastors reach for anything.

They try every remedy they hear of, be it Western or traditional medicine—this will fix it, that will grow it. They even sneak glances at hair transplant ads while considering a toupee. Just like our beloved middle-aged folks obsessed with miracle cures, pastors grab onto church growth theories if they hear they work, adopt "positive thinking" when they read it's effective, and become loyal followers—at least for a while. That's why the "prosperity gospel" is also prospering. If there's a growing church in the east, they go visit. If there's a successful pastor in the west, they go seek his advice.

But sadly, many pastors are just like me—average people. Mimicking the methods of top-tier people only leads to disaster. A little knowledge can be a dangerous thing.

I've spent nearly twenty years in this cycle of trial and error. Thankfully, my pride kept me from running around the country seeking guidance. Besides, there weren't many great teachers nearby, and I didn't have the money to travel far anyway.

I did sample church growth theories, positive thinking, and the prosperity gospel—but none suited my taste. Their flavor was different from that of the Bible I had grown up with. They reeked of American religious philosophies like pragmatism, idealism, and materialism—cheap butter I couldn't stomach.

Only the church growth theory, as a negative example, proved slightly useful—and I must admit that, to be fair.

So now, when I boldly assert that evangelism is essentially a simple task, it's based on my own trial and error, and all the wandering I've done. Through these missteps,

I've come to realize just how much traditional church forms and activities, instilled by church education and Bible schools, have forgotten the masses and grown disconnected from reality.

That led me to ask: Was Christianity always like this to begin with?

I started to study what the Bible really teaches about the Church—what forms and activities it presents. And I was shocked by what I found.

In Protestantism, there is virtually no ecclesiology to speak of.

If I did manage to find anything, it was always "Reformed ecclesiology" or "Baptist ecclesiology"—not a biblical ecclesiology derived from biblical theology. In the end, I had no choice but to read the Bible for myself and try to formulate a more biblical understanding of the Church.

But sadly, I'm just a backwoods missionary with no real theological training—not even a speck. So, I resorted to blind groping, chaotic floundering, and trial by error. With Bible in hand, I read every book on the Church I could get hold of. I bombarded any scholar I could find with endless questions. Finally, I even had to dust off and humbly bring out from the corner of my bookshelf my long-neglected Greek reference books.

Looking back, that struggle may have been a blessing in disguise. If I had been well-versed in theology from the start, I probably would've understood everything too easily—and forgotten it just as quickly.

So now, my views on evangelism, pastoring, and missions are not based on a pragmatic mindset— "this method worked, that method succeeded"—nor are they simply collections of experiences. Rather, I dare to say: They are a **practical theology derived from biblical ecclesiology**.

That may sound grandiose—but I'm small, so unless I make big declarations, no one will take me seriously. At the same time, this theology is grounded in the many failures of an ordinary preacher like me—failures I've wrestled with while trying desperately to find a form of ministry I could manage to carry out.

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A lone hunter was walking along the seashore. Now, if you're wondering why it's a **hunter** and not a **fisherman**, you're not very cooperative—and if I care about that, I must be a contrarian myself… but never mind.

Anyway, there it was: a monkey was drowning in the shallows. It must have been a really foolish monkey. The hunter easily caught it.

If that were all, it would be no big deal. But the next day, the hunter came back to the seashore. And the day after that too. And the day after that as well.

So if you ever happen to walk along the beach of a small island in the South, look carefully under the coconut trees. You might come across an old man, white-haired and shriveled, resting his chin on his hand, gazing long and quietly out to sea. He was once the best hunter on the island.

When my wife heard this story, the first thing she said was, "Well… that's not very impressive." And she's right. This was actually a story I made up to teach my Filipino co-evangelists. To be honest—it's a stolen story.

When I was in sixth grade, I was forced to perform a solo skit at the school arts festival called "Machibouke" ("Waiting in Vain"). Not because I was a good actor, but because the school, located deep in the mountains of Hokkaido, had only 26 students, and we needed to fill up the program. With no electricity and desperate for entertainment, our audience included fathers and mothers, grandpas and grandmas, and even runny-nosed little kids and teary-eyed daughters. It was a desperate measure.

Because of that, I ended up singing in public—against my late mother's firm wishes.

Machibouke, machibouke,

One day I worked hard in the fields

Then a rabbit leapt out

And tumbled down—thump!—on a tree root.

Machibouke, machibouke,

"Lucky me! From now on, I'll just wait and see."

If you wait long enough, prey will come to you,

A rabbit crashing into a tree root.

Machibouke, machibouke,

Yesterday I worked in the fields with a hoe,

But today I lean on my elbow and sunbathe,

All because of that lucky tree root.

Machibouke, machibouke,

Today I'm waiting—just waiting again.

Tomorrow I'll wait outside the forest,

For rabbits to crash into that tree root.

Machibouke, machibouke,

Once a cool millet field,

Now it's a wasteland of tumbleweeds,

With a cold north wind and that same old tree root…

That was the source material for my "stolen story." Though it was over thirty years ago, I can't guarantee the lyrics are exactly right. If anyone talks about copyrights, I've got nothing to say…

There are other proverbs and stories like it: "Luck falling from the shelf," "a fish riding the river," "grain stuck to wet hands," "good fortune comes to those who wait." There's even a folk tale called "Three-Year Sleeper." Maybe "ill-gotten gains never last" is more to the point…

Anyway, this is the kind of evangelism I've been doing. It's the kind of evangelism taught to me in Bible school, And the kind I stole—after much effort—from the traditional church.

According to a nationwide NHK survey from several years ago, 36% of Japanese people said that if they were to choose a religion, they would choose Christianity. The monkeys are still out there in the mountains. The rabbits are still hopping in the fields.

But today's church has become like the farmer in *Machibouke*, or the old man under the coconut tree on that southern island.

Now then—after all my grumbling and harsh words, you may want to ask, "Well, what about you?" That's why, from the very beginning, I've included myself as one of the targets of these complaints. In short, this entire piece is a brutal self-critique.

At the same time, I am undeniably a part of the modern church. I am one of its products. Therefore, this is not a critique hurled from outside, but one spoken from within the church, with myself planted firmly in its midst.

Still, for those of you reading this clumsy, foolish essay, it may feel like getting hit over the head out of nowhere. Hearing your beloved and faithfully served church suddenly insulted and ridiculed— it must feel like being punched three or four times by some punk who appeared out of nowhere. Surely it leaves you bewildered and angry.

The truth is: I am that punk. And I'm angry. I'm furious with my own incompetence. And I'm lashing out blindly.

I'm angry at the church that made me into this pathetic creature, and more than that, at the church that tolerates someone like me, saying, "Well, he's doing all right…"

Anyone who walks by—I want to punch them. Please, just chalk this up to fate. Forgive me.

And please—don't nitpick by saying, "You used two Buddhist expressions in such a short passage." If you go that far, I won't even be able to say "arigatou."

Come to think of it, there was once a preacher who often said, "Sleeves brushing is a tie from a previous life." Maybe he thought it meant "a slight connection." In any case… still weird.

The Theoretical Section: "But Evangelism"

Before I knew it, this had become a long-winded preamble. Let's get into the main topic.
Although calling it the "main topic" is a bit of a stretch—it's more like detours and wandering. Like someone who meant to stop after one drink but ended up having two, and now clings to a telephone pole, mumbling, "Officer, I'm sorry…" with wobbly legs. That's about the level of confidence I have here.

Still, let me boldly name this unsteady evangelism method:

"But Evangelism."

"Always-on" Evangelism

If a decade counts as a generation, then three generations ago, the issue of teacher performance evaluations became a big deal in Japan. Up to that point, teachers had tormented students with tests, wielded the dreadful "report card" as a sacred weapon, and coldly ranked and pressured their students.

Now, they were told *they* would be evaluated—and we delinquent kids rejoiced at the thought.

Incidentally, our denomination also has a kind of "performance evaluation." It's not intended as a strict assessment, but rather a monthly reporting duty—a perfectly natural request in any organization. At its best, it's an expression of pastoral

concern, so the leadership can better understand the churches' actual situations and provide appropriate support and guidance.

But to evangelists with inferiority complexes—like me—it feels worse than any report card.

The most important factor in this denominational evaluation is the **number of people attending Sunday worship.**

Those of us who secretly hope to "make a good impression" may end up including babies, children, and perhaps—though I hate to admit it—even stray kittens who happen to wander in…Well, that's probably just my own guilty imagination, twisted by too much exposure to overseas evangelists who report "ears not heads," or count the "fingers" of those making decisions for Christ.

In any case, today's churches put a lot of stock in Sunday worship. For example, if someone were to say: "Christ and the Father are one. Christ and the Holy Spirit are one. Christ is the Father; Christ is the Holy Spirit"— it probably wouldn't cause much of a stir.

Even if someone said: "Because God is love, He will ultimately save all of humanity"— that might still pass in many circles.

Indeed, you'll find plenty of such assertions promoted in so-called evangelical newspapers and magazines.

But what if I were to say: "I'm building a church that doesn't hold Sunday worship," or I tell my congregation they don't have to attend Sunday worship?

Now that would be a different story.

Modern churches might rekindle the same passionate zeal shown during the medieval witch hunts— and come after me with torches.

(In fact, I've heard of a fellow worker who was already burned by such a modern-day witch hunt.)

Today's church activity revolves around Sunday. Outside of Sunday, many churches don't do much of anything.

Now, someone might object: "That's not true! Our church is active seven days a week!" And I hope that's true. I hope there are many such churches.

If so, I will gladly repent for the sin of "over-generalization" being a term the Americans so love. But please don't misunderstand me. What I'm talking about here is the **activity of the church**, not the **workload of the pastor**.

I know many pastors who are incredibly busy, 365 days a year. That's why it's not uncommon to see pastors who, like old rags used to scrub wooden school floors, quickly grow worn, frayed, and threadbare.

Now, since pastors are also part of the church, you might say, "Isn't the pastor's work also the work of the church?"—a perfectly reasonable theological point. But let's set that aside for now. That's not where my argument lies.

The average Japanese church is incredibly busy on Sundays—so much so that it's beyond "busy" and has become utterly chaotic.

It's harder than sorting loaches, catfish, eels, and lampreys into separate buckets. And yet, from Monday to Saturday, many churches are in a state of **virtual closure**. That means ordinary people have virtually **no chance to hear the gospel** outside of Sunday.

To make matters worse, many churches today no longer hold evening evangelistic services. Why? Because people don't come.

So, if someone in Japan today wants to hear the gospel, they must be free **on Sunday between about 10 a.m. and noon**—the time when most churches hold their worship services.

Back when life was simpler—when people, even amid hard labor, still controlled their own time—this might have worked. But in our modern, hyper-complex society, where people are **controlled by time**, how many can really carve out a free Sunday morning?

If it were a matter of life and death, perhaps they would. But for someone who's merely "a little interested in Christianity," or thinking, "Maybe one day I'll become a Christian when I've got time,"—in other words, someone who's at the **most receptive**

stage— would they really go out of their way to find time and attend church? Almost certainly not.

So, what happens? When we do special evangelistic meetings, or house visits, and we find the person we're sharing the gospel with isn't free on Sundays… We tend to **give up**.

Like going out to catch small fish and stumbling upon a school of big ones— we simply give up and say, "Too bad."

The modern church has become a kind of twisted Sabbath legalist. It seems to think: **"If people can't come to church on Sunday, then they're sinners who deserve to perish." "They have no right to be saved, because they refuse to come hear the gospel at the time the church has designated."**

Each Sunday, the church practically prays like this: "O God, these sinners who, even though they know this church has stood here for thirty years, still refuse to come. Send them to hell. Send the police officers, firefighters, train operators, department store clerks, and all those who work on Sundays— and especially those salarymen who go golfing— punish them all without a shred of mercy."

And if such words are not preached aloud, they are at least **lived out**— with actions that speak louder than words. The church deeply believes that **it bears no responsibility** for the souls of those who weren't saved **because they couldn't come on Sunday.**

And yet—**miracles happen.**

Sometimes, for some reason, someone who normally works on Sundays happens to be free on a special Sunday— and they come to church and are saved. But that's where the tragedy begins. Now that person, who can't attend Sunday worship regularly, is seen as a **"B-grade Christian,"** and must endure the cold stares of others.

And then, another miracle happens. To become an "A-grade Christian," they **change jobs**, even at the cost of lower income.

I’ve witnessed this kind of inspiring miracle several times. It’s a beautiful victory of faith. But make no mistake: **it is a miracle.** It rarely happens. And honestly—we can’t afford to have it happen too often.

We were taught to **strictly observe the Lord’s Day**. I was saved in my first year of high school, and in my nearly 25 years of Christian life since then, I’ve only missed Sunday worship **twice**.

The first time was two days after an appendectomy. My pastor, knowing I’d insist on attending, hid my kimono. Going in pajamas was out of the question. So I stayed in bed, cursing the “lack of faith” of the pastor who’d stopped me from attending worship “for such a small thing.”

The second time was when I was sent to Okinawa for pioneer evangelism. We encountered a typhoon on the way— our ship was tossed about and turned back somewhere around Amami Oshima, and we had to stay the night in Kagoshima Bay.

That Sunday morning, I was surrounded by groaning passengers vomiting all around me, and strange, loud Ryukyuan music blaring from somewhere. I just couldn’t get myself to sing a hymn alone in that setting.

That’s how seriously I took Sunday worship. In high school, I never attended any school events held on Sundays. I didn’t even go to my own graduation ceremony. A friend brought me my diploma and a red-and-white manju afterward. I was proud to be an **A-grade Christian**.

There was a man who gave up his job as a railway worker after 30 years in order to attend Sunday worship. (I can’t even call him “brother” now—sadly, he later abandoned the faith entirely. Still, back then, he was my hero.)

By the way, when did Sunday start being called the “Holy Day”? What was the process behind it? Honestly, I don’t know. The New Testament doesn’t treat any particular day as especially sacred. So perhaps this idea comes from the Old Testament.

If that’s the case, it likely originates from the command to **keep the Sabbath holy**. Then, churches that refer to Sunday as a holy day must be treating **Sunday as the Sabbath**.

But if the Old Testament command about the Sabbath must be directly applied to today' s Christian life— both theologically and practically— we' re in for some trouble.

Didn' t Jesus **fight** against the legalistic Sabbath observance— even to the point of risking His life? Wasn' t the Sabbath originally on **Saturday**? Aren' t there activities that **shouldn' t be done** on the Sabbath, yet are regularly done by churches today?

How do we interpret Paul' s clear teaching in Romans 14:5-6 and Colossians 2:16, Now then—if calling Sunday a "holy day" simply means **functionally** choosing a day for convenience, and setting it apart for special activities dedicated to God, then it' s like **picking one bowl out of many** to feed the cat.

But wait—that's not sanctification. That' s **secular separation**. Sanctification is like choosing **one cup out of many** to be used only for the **king' s service**. Now *that*, I can understand.

In that case, there' s no reason it has to be **Sunday**. It could be **Friday** or **Tuesday**— whatever works best for the people. According to Jesus, the principle of the Sabbath is this: "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath."

In today' s hyper-complex world, where people live **diverse and irregular lives**, the most convenient day for the average person is… **every day**.

If today' s churches consider worship services to be opportunities for evangelism, then they ought to hold them **daily**— maybe even **twice a day**, if possible. Even without indulging in unrealistic "church growth" fantasies— like "If 100 people attend one Sunday service, then 7 services a week means 700 people!"— we might reasonably expect to reach 120.

So when did Sunday morning worship become the tradition? Personally, I value tradition. It represents the accumulated wisdom of many people over time— not some shallow conclusion drawn from one person' s flimsy ideas. At the same time, any tradition that has lost touch with its time and context is nothing more than an empty shell.

Tradition is not the **Word of God**. At most, it is a particular interpretation or application of God' s Word from a specific era and context. But when tradition is valued so much

that it **nullifies the Word of God**, well… that's exactly what kept happening even before Jesus' time. Apparently, humans are **traditionally weak against tradition**.

The Bible never commands us to hold Sunday morning worship. Nor does it explicitly say early churches did so.

What we do have is… **tradition**. The phrase **"the Lord's Day"** appears **once**—in Revelation 1:10. From that, we eventually derived terms like **"Lord's Day worship."**

It referred to the day of the Lord's resurrection, and yes, it meant **Sunday**. But this terminology didn't become common until much later— thanks to the **Didache** and **Ignatius**.In Acts 20:7, there's a famous verse that says, "On the first day of the week we came together to break bread." It's often used to support the idea that early Christians held Sunday worship. But, take a closer look at the context: This "gathering" took place **at night**. And the one who "preached for a long time" that evening was **Paul**.

That same night, a boy named **Eutychus** fell from a third-story window and died. Paul raised him back to life, then **continued preaching until dawn**. The next morning, Paul **departed by ship**.

Now, what kind of person would start a sea voyage on a Sunday morning, if they believed Sunday was the holy "Lord's Day"? And who would preach all night **if they had Sunday morning worship the next day**?

This passage actually shows the early church gathering on **Saturday night**. In Jewish reckoning, **days begin at sunset**. So "the first day of the week" begins after sunset on Saturday. That's when early Christians gathered.

Why? Because **Sunday was a workday**. For slaves and laborers, Sunday was just another busy day. So they gathered on **Saturday night**, after the Sabbath ended—**a time of freedom**.

Thus, the New Testament "Lord's Day worship" was probably **a Saturday night service**—not a Sunday morning one.

In other words, the important thing wasn't **which day** they gathered. What mattered was simply that they **gathered**.

They gathered to:

- break bread together,
- study the apostles' teaching,
- pray together,
- share material goods,
- praise God,
- encourage one another,
- and testify to outsiders.

They didn't have a proper "church building." They had no pulpit. No robed pastors or stained-glass windows. No choir. No program. No bulletins. No steeple, no bell, no tithe envelopes, no organ. And yet, they were **the Church**.

They didn't just meet on Sundays. According to Acts 2:46, they met **every day** in homes. Of course, I'm not suggesting we abandon Sunday worship altogether. Sunday worship can be a **valuable tradition**. It can serve a meaningful role in our modern society— especially for churches with regular working members.

But let's not forget the **essence**. The Church is not about:

- one specific day of the week,
- one specific time slot,
- one specific place,
- or one specific style.

It is a **living body**— a gathering of those who believe in Christ, joined together in love, empowered by the Spirit, and moving through the world.

So what happens to people who can't come to church on Sundays? Are they **beyond saving**? Are they **not chosen**? Should we say to them, "Too bad you work Sundays. Sorry, no salvation for you." Is that the gospel?

If someone is truly seeking God, truly thirsting for salvation— but can't come to Sunday worship, what should the Church do? We must **go to them**.

Meet them **whenever** they're free. Go **wherever** they are. Speak to **whoever** we find.

Use **whatever** means we can. That's what I call **Ever Evangelism**.

And in a society like Japan, where less than 1% of people attend church, if we don't embrace **Ever Evangelism**, we will never see revival.

We must proclaim a gospel that's available:

- not just on Sundays,
- not just in church buildings,
- not just to the well-behaved and free-timed.

Jesus said,"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. "He didn't say," Set up a building, post a schedule, and wait for seekers to find you on their day off."

Now, what does it mean to **preach the gospel**?

It does **not** mean:

- giving a 40-minute sermon,
- quoting five Bible verses,
- talking about the cross, and
- giving an altar call.

Of course, that can be one form of evangelism.

But the gospel is not **confined** to that.

Sometimes it means:

- listening to someone's burdens,
- crying with them,
- offering a hand to a fallen person,
- rejoicing in someone else's joy,
- walking silently beside them.

It might mean giving a ride to someone whose baby has a high fever when they have no way to get to the hospital. It might mean holding someone's hand and praying, even if they don't believe in God. It might mean saying: "I'm not sure either, but I believe there's a God who understands you. You don't need a title, or a pulpit, or a seminary degree." You don't even need perfect theology.

What you need is a heart that **aches** for people, and a **willingness** to act.

So then, what does it mean to be **saved**?

Is it when someone prays the "sinner's prayer" at the end of a crusade? When they raise their hand at an evangelistic meeting? When they come to the altar in tears and say "Amen"? Is that salvation? Is it only when they are baptized, receive a Bible, and attend church regularly?

No, it begins **before** that.

Salvation begins the moment a person first turns toward God— even **slightly**, even **hesitantly**, even **wordlessly**. When a person says in their heart, "If there is a God, I want to know Him." Or If Jesus is real, I want to meet Him someday." That, too, is the **beginning of salvation**. Of course, that doesn't mean we leave them there. We **walk with them**, patiently, compassionately, without forcing them to conform to our schedule, theology, or building hours.

When a pastor says, "You're not saved unless you come to Sunday worship," he is closing a door Christ never closed.

Christ said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened." Not "Come on Sunday between 10 a.m. and noon, and only if you're properly dressed."

God's work is not limited to inside the church.

Salvation doesn't only happen in church buildings. And the Holy Spirit doesn't only move during "worship time." God is working **outside**. Outside the sanctuary. Outside Sunday. Outside theology. Outside the "Church."

He's working in the hearts of people in hospitals, prisons, factories, convenience stores, bars, and bedrooms.

Sometimes, the Spirit moves so powerfully in a drunk man's muttering, or in the tears of a prostitute, or in the silence of a dying atheist, that it puts our Sunday sermons to shame.

Yet we, the church, so often fail to notice. We label them "outsiders," as if they are outside **our** reach— and therefore outside **God's** reach. But God reaches wherever He pleases. His arm is not too short. His mercy is not confined by our buildings.

The Practical Section: The Four "Ever" Evangelisms

What I've been talking about up to now is really just **"laying the groundwork."** From here on, I want to explore **how we can put this into practice**.

Let me now present the four types of "Demo Evangelism." Or in English—**Ever Evangelism**. These are:

1. **Whenever Evangelism**（いつでも）
2. **Wherever Evangelism**（どこでも）
3. **Whoever Evangelism**（誰でも）
4. **Whatever Evangelism**（なんでも）

Let's take a look at each of them

and the other person is willing to listen— in turn.

1. Whenever Evangelism

This means sharing the gospel **anytime**—whenever there's an opportunity. Not just on Sunday mornings at 10:30. If someone is willing to talk about Jesus at 6 a.m., then we talk at 6 a.m. If it's 1 a.m., then 1 a.m. that's **whenever**.

If someone is in tears after a long night shift at 2 a.m. and says, "Do you think there's a God?" that's the **perfect** time for evangelism. If you're free to speak— You don't

need a church service, a microphone, or a sermon. Just **presence**, and a few word of hope.

2. Wherever Evangelism

This means sharing the gospel **anywhere**.

Not just in churches, chapels, or conference halls.
We speak **wherever** people are willing to listen.
On the street, in homes, in cafés, under bridges, in hospital rooms, in prison cells, in rice fields, in taxis, in pachinko parlors, in karaoke bars—wherever.

I've shared the gospel in a nipa hut on a muddy mountainside,
in a crowded prison yard,
on a hammock stretched between trees,
in a jail cell so dark you could barely see the person in front of you.
I've spoken the name of Jesus in a broken mix of Japanese, Tagalog, and gestures.

And every time, God was there.

Some people only feel "comfortable" sharing the gospel in the sanctuary, where everything is neat and quiet and under control.

But Jesus?
He went to where people were.

He met them at wells, in trees, on boats, in marketplaces, at dinner tables.
He preached on hillsides, in homes, and in the streets.
And He continues to walk those places—**if we go with Him.**

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3. Whoever Evangelism

This means sharing the gospel with **anyone**—not just the "church types." Not just with:

- polite,
- well-educated,
- nicely dressed,
- morally upright,
- middle-class people who seem "ready for salvation."

But with:

- drunkards,
- gamblers,
- loudmouths,
- swindlers,
- the mentally unstable,
- rebels,
- the illiterate,
- those who haven't bathed in weeks,
- those who smell like beer or puke,
- those who blurt out curses when you say "Jesus."

Whoever.

Jesus said, "I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners." But modern churches tend to attract only "church people." People who:

- look right,
- act right,
- say the right words,
- and already know how to behave in church.

That's not bad— but it's not enough. If we only aim for people who are already **almost Christians**, we will never reach the **lost**.

And more importantly, we are dishonoring the very gospel we claim to preach.

4. Whatever Evangelism

This means using **whatever** method works to share the gospel. Not just sermons. Not just literature. Not just altar calls. But drama, song, dance, comics, manga,

testimonies, cooking classes, farm work, motorcycle repair, childcare, language exchange, even dumb jokes. **Whatever** connects a heart to Christ—use it.

I once evangelized using a picture book drawn on cardboard with crayons. It had no theological depth. But a small child listened, eyes wide. That child later brought her

mother. And her mother brought a neighbor.

Was it "proper theology"? No. Was it the gospel? Yes. We do not preach **methods**. We preach **Christ**. The gospel is not limited to a **format**. It is a fire. A whisper. A tear. A song. A presence. A mustard seed.

Conclusion

In the end, evangelism is not a **method**, not a **theory,** not a **gift for the chosen few**. It is a **heartbeat**. It is one wounded person, telling another wounded person, where to find healing.

It is one beggar, telling another beggar, where to find bread. The reason I keep failing at evangelism is because I get too serious. Too proud. Too desperate for results. Too self-conscious. Too impatient.

But God is so patient. He lets us fumble. He lets us sweat. He even lets us be foolish. Because He knows— **we love Him**. And when we try to tell others about Him— clumsily, nervously, imperfectly— He smiles.